Siding provides bright, crisp look

If you can't swing the mortgage for a new home, or just don't want to move, you can give your old house a bright crisp look with new siding.

Snappy colors and a variety of new textures and tyles available in aluminum siding and trim enable you to recreate the original exterior surface, or change its appearance dramatically.

This kind of facelift also reduces maintenance, because new aluminum finishes, guaranteed to last up to 40 years, eliminate periodic painting.

Consider the cost

The average house needs a paint job every four years. If that paint job costs $2,000 this year, over a 12-year period you'd be spending $12,000 for repainting with the current 10 percent inflation rate. Thus, you can realize an early return on an investment in new aluminum siding.

Durable, resistant to corrosion and cracking, even in damp climates, aluminum is the original re-siding material and has been around for over 30 years. It has been used for remodeling over 12,000,000 older homes and, incrreasingly, new homes are being surfaced with aluminum.

Wide range of colors

Aluminum comes in more different colors than other siding materials. While white is still a popular color choice, it has given way to a whole palette of new siding colors, ranging the full spectrum. Currently, ivory and beige are favorites with blues, greens, reds and the earth tones close runners-up.

There is also a trend toward using aluminum siding and trim in contrasting colors. This tends to individualize a house, particularly in a development, make it look more intersting and sharpen its architectural lines.

Contrasting trim popular

Ivory aluminum siding with brown trim (or the reverse color combination) is particularly in vogue now and white trim with dark siding colors is also being used more frequently.

House trim includes the under side of the roof overhang (the soffit), edging of the roof (the fascia), gutters, downspouts, shutters and other accessories.

While smooth surface siding continues to be popular, new textures have been developed by aluminun siding manufacturers to simulate wood grains.

Which is which?

These new finishes have been achieved by embossing and by new two-tone coating systems. These new grains look so authentic that it is difficult to distinguish the aluminum siding from wood without going up and touching it.

Horizontal aluminum siding comes in 8-in. wide panels and in double-four-in. (an eight-in. panel that looks like two four-in. ones) to suit various styles of architectue. The former is used for contemporary homes and the latter for traditional or Colonial style structures.

Vertical aluminum panels are available for use where special treatment will make the house look more interesting. They are particularly effective for gables and dormers.

Then, there's aluminum coil stock (a roll of flat aluminum), from which a skilled contractor can form designs to duplicate intricate original trim. Coil stock comes in a variety of colors.

To preserve the architectural integrity of a 19th century home, for instance, one home improvement contractor reproduced casings around octagonal windows by cutting aluminum coil stock to fit the original architectural specifications.

In another house, an aluminum applicator reproduced original pediments over each window. He used narrow panels of vertical siding within the triangular areas, and then custom-formed aluminum coil stock to conform to their original wood framings.

Fine old details, such as the gingerbread on a Victorian style house, can be retained and painted to blend comfortably with modern siding. Since repainting such detail is minimal, the low-maintenance aspect of the rest of the house will not be seriously affected.

Most remodeling, and all new buildings today are done with insulated siding, in order to conserve energy. With proper insulation, heat in winter and conditioned air in summer stays inside the house to help reduce fuel use and keep you more comfortable.

Insulation comes in various forms, and you should know their different characteristics.

Pay attention to R values. These are thermal resistance values by which insulating systems are measured. The higher the number, the more efficient the insulation properties.

Aluminum siding over a foam plastic board and reflector foil is particularly efficient, with an R factor of 5 to 6. Hollow-backed aluminum siding with a fiberboard backer provides an R value of 1.4. Siding with foil alone rates an R value of less than one and has little insulating value.

For best results

To achieve the best results from aluminum siding and insulating materials, be sure your windows and doors are caulked properly before trim and accessories are added to the siding. Then, unless you already have them, consider adding aluminum storm windows to maximize energy conservation.

Remember, however, that even with the best materials, your remodeling job will be only as good as the contractor who installs it. Be sure to choose one whose expertise in applying aluminum has been proven.

Take the time to look at homes he has re-sided, check with neighbors and firends who have had their homes remodeled, question local bankers and real estate agents, the Chamber of Commerce and the Better Business Bureau before you sign a contract.

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Tips on trees and shrubs

Spring is a good time of year to add some new trees and shrubs to the yard. If you plan to add a new tree or shrub, here are some tips which will help you provide the best possible growing conditions to help them thrive:

Dig a hole about twice the diameter of the root ball, placing the soil to one side(preferably on a large tarp to protect the lawn.

Next, fill the hole with water and let drain. Then, mix an equal part of Canadian sphagnum peat moss with the soil which has been removed from the hole.

The sphagnum peat moss conditions the soil assuring that water and nutrients stay at root level where they are needed.

Fill the hole halfway with the peat moss/soil mixture and water thoroughly. Set the tree or shrub in the hole making sure the original soil line matches the soil level of the new location.

Loosen the burlap around the root ball and fill the hole with the remaining soil/sphagnum peat moss pixture. Tamp the soil and water thoroughly. Leave a slight depression to collect rainfall.

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And it's still a bargain buy

Paint increases value of home

Paint has always been an economical way to increase the value of a house and that is still true today. Despite being an industry greatly affected by petroleum price fluctuations, paint has remained a bargain buy.

Consider that you can buy one gallon of paint for $14-16 (when it's not on sale) and cover about 400 square feet-an average room. Less than eight gallons of paint will cover the entire exterior of an average house.

And, yet, the increased value to a home's worth as a result of a new coat of paint is incredible. Any realtor will tell you that a freshly painted house is easier to sell (and at a higher price).

Minimize problems

Thoughtful selection of paint colors can help minimize the architectural problems of your home, as well as emphasize its best features.

White or very light colors make a house seem larger than it really is, and so can extending the color of the house to all adjoining areas-garages, decks, foundations, etc.

Dark tones will make a large house appear smaller and give it a more "earthy" look. A house that is too tall can be visually lowered with a two-tone treatment, painting the half above architectural breaks a deeper color.

A long, low look can be achieved by painting the body of the house a color strongly contrasting with the color of the roof line, as in the house pictured, to highlight horizontal lines.

Accent trim and doors with a contrasting color; minimize excessive detail by painting it the same color as the house or a darker shade.

Lengthy warranties available

Not only is a freshly painted house more attractive, but paints today provide considerable surface protection. Many interior paints are warranted for up to eight years, exterior paints up to five years, with proper surface preparation.

Proper surface preparation is the key. That means scraping loose paint, caulking cracks, sanding glossy spots, cleaning the surface and priming the surface. Primers must be completely dry before the final coat of paint is applied, usually two to three days later.

Exterior problems

Five main problems strike painted exteriors-blistering and peeling, chalking, cracking, "alligatoring," and mildew.

Blistering and peeling are usually caused by moisture, trapped beneath the surface, that evaporates, pushing the paint away from the surface with it.

Scrape the affected areas, then wire brush or sand. Bare spots should be primed with an exterior primer. Let dry, then apply a finish coat.

However,the problem of blistering and peeling will reappear unless the moisture problem is alleviated. Repair loose caulking and install vents on exhaust fans, especially in the kitchen, bathrom and laundry areas. Consider dehumidifiers and attic louvers.

Chalking is caused by inadequately primed and sealed porous surfaces, overthinning of paint or spreading paint too thin.

This powdery material should be wire brushed away and the surface washed thoroughly, then primed with an exterior oil base primer. Allow the primer to dry two or three days, then finish with paint.

Cracking and "alligatoring" are caused by application of a top coat before the undercoat is dry, applying too many coats, or painting over a glossy surface. Corrective action begins with removal of the old paint film.

(Cont'd on Page 10)

Termites are an unpleasant spring phenomenon

/Along with singing birds, blooming shrubs and gentle breezes, spring is also the season for termites to swarm.

Outdoors, this occurence is a useful sign of Nature's balance after spring rains in April and May. But when the swarming happens indoors, homeowners often panic.

When termites swarm indoors, they run about in confused circles until their wings become detached, and then finally die.

These flying termites are the "reproductives" of the termite caste system. They are not woodeaters, and they will not start a new colony inside your house. But indoor swarming does imply a structual infestation of the white, wingless "worker" termites.

It's possible that strange flying insects inside your house may actually be flying ants, which are the "reproductives" of the ant caste system. Ants may be a nuisance, but they do not cause structural damage.

Flying ants can be larger than flying termites, and they are distinguished by a narrow, or pinched in waistline.

If you really do have termites swarming inside your home, take a walk outside and try to determine how and where they entered. Some likely places are around door steps, fireplaces and chimneys. Other possible entry sites are cracks in brick veneer and rock foundations, and areas next to slab patios, walks and carports.

The places that termites like best are any spots where wood comes into direct contact with the ground.

A telltale sign of termites is a tube or tunnel made of dirt and saliva extending from a wood source to the ground. These tunnels are used by termite workers to commute from their colony in the grund to a wooden food source. The tunnels kkep the termite workers from drying out-a lethal hazard.

When a break is made in a termite funnel, soldier termites crowd into the opening. Their sharp jaws help to protect the workers as they busily repair the break.

Once you see the tunnels and other signs of termite infestation in your house, make careful plans for a counterattack. You can either call a commercial pest control operator (PCO) or do the job youself. Whatever you do, don't rush or make impulsive judgments.

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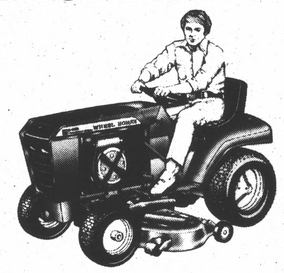

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